

Col. Edward Cook House  
Nr. Fayette City, Fayette County, Pa.

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. 4 of Pennsylvania  
*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Lamont M. Button, District Officer  
119 E. Montgomery Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Colonel Edward Cook House  
Fayette County, Pa.

Owner: Robert Cook, R. D. #1, Belle Vernon, Pa.

Date of Erection: 1772-1776.

Architect: Unknown, if any.

Builder: Jesse Cunningham.

Present Condition: Original mantles have all been removed and replaced by simple carpenter-built mantles of no particular interest. One of the bedrooms, however, still retains the cast-iron fireplace facing which is modeled in fairly strong relief. The one-story addition has a modern fireplace in its huge chimney. This chimney originally contained not only a nine foot fireplace, but a bake oven which opened to the outside. The present roof is a standing seam metal roof which has been heavily painted, and according to the present owner, has been on for over fifty years. All of the three porches are more recent construction. Since the out buildings are also a part of this menage, it is well to note that the present spring house with its low flat roof once contained a second story with a fireplace, and that the removal of pillars and props from the coal workings one hundred and seventy feet below the surface, within the past year, has caused some extensive cracking of the spring house walls.

Number of Stories: The main element contains a basement, two stories, and an attic; the wing, one story. The out buildings were of one-story except the spring house which contained two stories.

Materials of Construction: The main element of the house is composed entirely of limestone, well-laid in what seems to be for the most part original mortar. The southern gable is particularly pleasing in its texture. This limestone was quarried on the farm and was used, with the exception of a few pieces of sandstone, particularly on the eastern gable, almost exclusively. The out buildings, however, are entirely of sandstone. The southern chimney is triangular in plan to permit of corner fireplaces in the four rooms on the south side. The fireplaces in the south-western rooms have been closed to obtain a furnace flue, and the present owner states that in building a chimney flue, he encountered limestone slabs five inches thick of an area exceeding half the internal area of the chimney which were spaced every thirty inches in height on alternate sides from a point above the second floor fireplaces to the top of the chimney. These evidently were inserted as baffles to prevent down draft. The wood used in the construction was all cut on the farm and is composed of pine, oak, cherry, and walnut. Construction members were of oak and hand-hewn; rafters were of

poles. The present owner, a fifth generation descendant, states that when he installed the present bathroom, he encountered in the second floor construction, a grid-iron of oak joists which were halved over each other. All of the second floor partitions were one inch tongued and grooved boards. Some of the partitions on the first floor were of studs. The plastered walls are extremely irregular and, in the addition, quite out of plumb. The sitting room or parlor contains some walnut paneling on the chimney breast and a walnut corner cupboard. The window and door jambs in this room are paneled. The window sash are pinned together and contain much of the original glass, which is supposed to have been brought over the mountains on horseback. The east elevation contains a frieze board the full length of the house of cherry, embellished with a hand-carved dentil molding. The stone work on the east side of the house has been covered by plaster which is now beginning to fall off, and which will reveal a much more interesting surface. Several home-made terra cotta drain tiles were discovered when the present owner excavated in the basement to install a furnace. Details of these tiles are shown.

Other Existing Records: It is understood that there are records of this house in the Carnegie Library at Pittsburgh, and that the Western Pennsylvania Architectural Survey has considerable data concerning it.

Additional Data: Col. Edward Cook was born in Chambersburg, Pa. and came to Western Pennsylvania in 1770, at which time he built a log cabin somewhere in the vicinity, if not on this site, in which he opened a store and conducted a modest inn. He evidently prospered and was satisfied with the location for he erected the present dwelling here between the years 1772 and 1776 and used it also as a store and inn. He also erected and conducted a saw and grist mill near the present location of Fayette City. Col. Cook is supposed to have owned twenty-one slave and his descendants referred to the one-story addition as the slave quarters. This assumption does not seem tenable, not only because it would seem small for that purpose, but it would leave the house without a proper kitchen. From the size of this chimney and the fact that it also contained a bake oven, it is fair to assume that this room was both original kitchen and dining room, and might possibly have antedated the main element of the house. Col. Cook held many public offices and several commissions in the Army. He was a personal friend of George Washington and entertained him in this house on several occasions, as well as Albert Gallatin. Washington is supposed to have occupied the small first floor room which projects under the stairway.

Much of this information submitted under "Additional Data" has been secured by the Western Pennsylvania Architectural Survey, a project of the Buhl Foundation, under the direction of Mr. Charles M. Stotz, Bessemer

Building, Pittsburgh, Pa.

*Lamont H. Button*

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Pennsylvania District No. 4

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